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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 TEGUCIGALPA 000637

SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA A/S SHANNON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/23/2019

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [AEMR](#) [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [KDEM](#) [MARR](#) [PINR](#) [HO](#)

TFH01

SUBJECT: TFH01: PRESIDENT ZELAYA AND AMBASSADOR DISCUSS
ARIAS MEDIATION

REF: (A) TEGUCIGALPA 635 AND PREVIOUS (B) SECSTATE
69222

TEGUCIGALP 00000637 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: Ambassador Hugo Llorens, reasons 1.4 (b & d)

¶1. (S) Summary: President Manuel "Mel" Zelaya told the Ambassador that he believes that the Arias process is close to failure. He blamed the de facto regime's intransigence for the near collapse of the mediation. He urged the U.S. to take stronger punitive measures against the Micheletti regime. The Ambassador encouraged Zelaya to have patience and give the Arias effort more time. The Ambassador expressed concern about Zelaya's personal security and urged him not/not to return to Honduras. We believe Zelaya's presence in Managua is increasingly Chavez's and Ortega's influence over his decisions. We will continue to stay in contact with him and exert our influence over him. End Summary.

¶2. (S) The Ambassador spoke to President Zelaya the evening of July 22 to discuss the results of the Arias mediation. Zelaya conveyed his disappointment with the process. He said he and his team had acted in good faith and had supported President Arias's mediation efforts since the process began. Zelaya said he had accepted the initial Arias 7-point proposal, and was willing to favorably consider the latest version. The Arias terms were extremely limiting and created numerous conditions on his return. He said he was willing to accept them in the interest of resolving the Honduran crisis, although he stressed that the entire international community demanded that he be restored in office without conditions. Zelaya noted that de facto President Roberto Micheletti was not interested in a deal and was using the Arias mediation to stall for time and to consolidate his power in Honduras. He lashed out at Micheletti and said that he and his cronies would use the six months in office to loot the Honduran state. As he has before, he insisted that the military was the key and that if Micheletti was pressured by General Vasquez and the other commanders, Micheletti can be forced into a deal. The Ambassador responded that in the lead up to the negotiations the U.S. had exerted great

pressure here in Tegucigalpa and in Washington in support of the restoration of his government and in support of Arias. The Ambassador stressed that there was a gradual shift with key business, political and civil society leaders as they grasped the negative consequences of the overwhelming international rejection of the coup on themselves personally and on Honduras. We believed that these key players were exerting pressure on Micheletti and his inner circle. The Ambassador added that the hard-line position was gradually being weakened layer by layer. The Ambassador counseled patience and said that we and other friends would continue to maintain the pressure and seek to influence the Micheletti regime to agree to the latest Arias proposal, which was a very generous one and offered the possibility of restoring democracy and establishing terms for a genuine reconciliation.

13. (S) Zelaya appreciated U.S. efforts; however, he felt the time had come to exert greater pressure on the regime. He discussed the letter he had written to President Obama describing the coup and requesting that the U.S. revoke the visas of the key coup plotters. He said he believed that the U.S. needed to take even more public and forceful action against the Micheletti regime. He also said that he was seeking OAS support for a stronger position. He said the OAS and international position on the upcoming elections was a key issue. He believes that the OAS needed to send a warning that the nations of the hemisphere would not recognize the election process or the transfer of power from the de facto regime to the newly elected government. He reasoned that such an action might bring the political parties to put pressure on the regime to come to the table.

14. (S) The Ambassador expressed concern about President Zelaya's personal security. He advised him not/not to

TEGUCIGALP 00000637 002.2 OF 002

return to Honduras. The Ambassador warned that his return to Honduras would likely trigger violence, which would be catastrophic for the Honduran people, and for his own efforts to restore democracy to Honduras. Zelaya said he was under great pressure from his supporters and others to return to Honduras. He said the longer he waited the more his supporters would lose hope. He agreed, however, that a premature return would be counterproductive. He said he planned to get close to the Nicaraguan-Honduran border soon and have a meeting with supporters, but would not enter Honduras. I urged him that if he was seriously considering returning that he contact me first. He said he would do this, but that at some point he may be pressured to return.

15. (S) Comment: President Zelaya's presence in Nicaragua is increasing the influence of ALBA countries over his decision making. We believe that Chavez and Ortega are urging him to return immediately. However, he also understands that the Arias channel represents the most viable way to resolve the issue. We will continue to stay in close touch and seek to counter the ALBA influence, but from afar. End Comment.

LLORENS